

# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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### USE OF POISONS HALTED BY INTERIOR IN ANIMAL DAMAGE CONTROL PROGRAM

Secretary of the Interior Rogers C. B. Morton announced today that his Department's Fish and Wildlife Service has ceased to formulate, distribute, or use poison for killing predatory animals on Federal lands.

His action implements a new Presidential order directing drastic overhaul of the animal damage control program on public lands, both with administrative changes and proposed new legislation.

The Secretary said toxicants on hand are being held, and retrieval of bait already placed in the field has begun. All baits will be removed as quickly as weather and the terms of current agreements with cooperators will permit.

"President Nixon's Message on the Environment demonstrates that he means business -- and so does the Department of the Interior," Secretary Morton said. "We are moving ahead with both administrative and legislative remedies to correct a situation that needs reform."

As ordered by the President, use is also being halted of toxic chemicals with "secondary poisoning effects." These are poisons aimed at the prey of predators, such as rodents, birds and other creatures, whose carcasses could contain dangerous residues of poison.

Exceptions to these bans will be made only if the use of poison is required to protect human life, health, or safety; to preserve a wildlife species threatened with extinction or likely soon to become so threatened; or to prevent substantial irretrievable damage to nationally significant natural resources.

Even under such circumstances, each exception would have to be specially justified by a written report, prepared following consultation with the Secretaries of the Interior, Agriculture, and Health, Education and Welfare, and the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, and determining that the emergency cannot be dealt with except by use of poisons.

Fish and Wildlife Service personnel and available cooperating personnel are authorized to continue to protect crops and livestock by using nonchemical techniques such as trapping, shooting, or denning (removal of young) in those States where these practices are legal under local laws.

Legislation is being proposed to Congress by Secretary Morton to abolish direct Federal participation in predator control activity and to provide for intensified research to develop safer control methods, and to investigate predatory species fully. This information would be provided to the States. In addition, the proposed bill would provide for a three-year phased period for the States to assume responsibility for animal damage control programs on a matching fund grant-in-aid basis. Until such legislation is passed, the Service will continue to conduct its program without using poisons.

Assistant Secretary of the Interior Nathaniel P. Reed, who heads Interior's programs for fish, wildlife and parks, stated: "We recognize that a difficult transition period is ahead. We intend to do our best to minimize any potential problems by cooperating fully, within the constraints of the new national and Interior policies, with all individuals and organizations that are involved with animal damage control programs."

Reed commended the Service personnel who have conducted the control program, as "men who have carried on a controversial program in a responsible manner under difficult circumstances, in accordance with the mandates of the Congress and Federal policy. We have now moved into a period of public concern where changes are possible."

The problem of cooperative predator control programs administered by the Interior Department was highlighted by Secretary Morton last July 9, in a speech to the National Wildlife Federation Conservation Summit at Estes Park, Colorado.

At that time, Mr. Morton announced appointment of a blue-ribbon task force to study predator control programs throughout the country. Sponsored jointly by Interior and the Council on Environmental Quality, the task force was made up entirely of wildlife management experts from various universities and chaired by Dr. Stanley Cain of the University of Michigan.

The group's 207-page report, calling for major changes in predator control techniques, was released this week. Titled, "Predator Control--1971, Report to the Council on Environmental Quality and the Department of the Interior by the Advisory Committee on Predator Control," it is available in limited quantities by writing to the Director, Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

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